

# BOSTON'S PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDINGS

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS DEPARTMENT

prepared by the Citywide Educational Coalition  
in cooperation with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce

MAY 4 1987

## Q. HOW MANY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE THERE IN BOSTON?

*A*  
*CEC*  
*87/3*

### A. The Boston Public Schools include:

- 17 high schools. Nine have fewer than 1,000 students each. The largest—Boston Latin—has 2,250 students.
  - 22 middle schools, with 200-850 students. Half have under 500 students.
  - 76 elementary schools. Fifty have enrollments under 400.
  - 3 specialized schools for 500 students with special needs in grades K-12.
- 118 schools total

The BPS also maintains fourteen other buildings, including its 11-story central office building, the Humphrey Occupational Resource Center, and White Stadium. Since 1970, the BPS has closed 91 schools, built 21 new schools, and converted five other buildings to school use.

## Q. WHAT DOES A BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOL LOOK LIKE INSIDE?

### A. The older schools look exactly as they did 50 years ago: high ceilings, tiled halls, wood floors. Elementary schools have classrooms, a library, a principal's office, a teachers' room, but no gym, cafeteria, auditorium, music or art rooms. The newer schools look like new schools everywhere.

If you walked through Boston's schools, you would find:

- gyms in almost all middle and high schools, and in 17 of the 76 elementary schools. Only four high schools have outdoor facilities for track, soccer, etc;
- cafeterias in 47 schools, including in 12 of the 76 elementary schools;
- computers in all schools and computer rooms in almost all;
- a language lab in only one school, Boston Latin School;
- libraries in all schools, though only 36 schools were built with them.

## Q. WHAT ARE THE PHYSICAL CONDITIONS OF THE SCHOOLS?

### A. All buildings need major repairs. Boston's public schools are old: 81 of the 118 schools were built before World War II, most in the 20's and 30's, and have not been modernized. The 21 schools built since 1970 need more than \$5M in work because of design problems and shoddy original construction. Of the 118 schools:

80 need new windows  
50 need new roofs  
118 need electrical work

76 need new heating systems  
43 need new plumbing  
90 need exterior work

## Q. HOW MUCH DOES THE BPS SPEND ON MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS?

### A. For FY87, the BPS has allocated \$34M for maintenance and repairs:

For Salaries:

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| 53 Administrators & Assistants . . . . . | \$ 1.8M |
| 8 Clerical Staff . . . . .               | \$ .2M  |
| 465 Custodians . . . . .                 | \$10.3M |
| Benefits . . . . .                       | \$ 2.0M |
|  | \$14.3M |

For Other Costs:

|                     |         |
|---------------------|---------|
| Utilities . . . . . | \$12.0M |
| *Repairs . . . . .  | \$ 6.3M |
| Supplies . . . . .  | \$ 1.0M |
| Other . . . . .     | \$ .4M  |
|                     | \$19.7M |

\*Because more than \$26M of the \$34M budget is spent on fixed costs such as salaries and utilities, little is free to be spent on repairs. Further, included in the \$6.3M repairs budget is almost \$2M for maintenance contracts (for elevators, boilers, etc.), leaving only about \$4.3M to do the actual repairs to all school buildings. The result is that only **emergency** repairs can be done, and then, the budget covers only about ¾ of all the emergency repairs requested by principals. As one administrator put it: "The best way to get one window fixed is to break six more. Then it's an emergency!"

**Q. WHAT HAS NOT BEEN DONE?**

- A. Because of the budget constraints, almost no money has been spent on:
- preventive maintenance: fixing a minor roof leak before it becomes major.
  - capital improvements: replacing outdated boilers, plumbing, windows.
  - "frills": refinishing floors, painting classrooms, etc. Most have not been painted in 15 years.

**Q. WHO DOES THE REPAIR WORK?**

- A. All work is contracted out to private firms. The BPS has no professional carpenters, plumbers, etc. on its staff.

**Q. IS THERE A "MASTER PLAN" TO FIX UP THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS?**

- A. There are currently several plans completed or being written:
- The court-ordered Unified Facilities Plan (UFP) prioritized school repairs and set a 10-year schedule for doing the work. Cost: \$75M, including \$35M to renovate the two Latin Schools.
  - The city's Capital Improvement Plan will fund \$106M in school repairs, \$31M more than was required by the UFP. The money will allow most of the UFP work to be done in half the time, 5 years.

**Q. WILL THIS ADDITIONAL MONEY HELP?**

- A. To some extent, yes. With this one-time shot of funds, the BPS will be able to make some major repairs to buildings: replacing old furnaces, installing energy-efficient windows, etc. Because less money will then have to be spent to keep the old equipment running, more money will be available for other repairs. In addition, the superintendent added \$2M to the BPS repairs budget this year, allowing the start-up of a long-term program to paint classrooms, replace rugs, etc.

Money alone, however, will not make the schools cleaner. In a recent study, Boston's Fin Com found no accountability for attendance or performance at **any** level for custodians or their supervisors. They found, e.g., that Boston's five custodial supervisors collectively worked a **total** of eight hours in the 18 days they were observed. The Fin Com called for changing the custodians' contract, hiring private cleaning firms to clean some schools, recruiting a professional manager for the department, and firing the custodial supervisors. Three of the five custodial supervisors have been allowed to retire, and two were demoted. The Superintendent is considering Fin Com's other recommendations.

**POINTS TO NOTE:**

- The BPS has 17 high schools for about only 17,000 students. With low regular education enrollments, only a few schools can offer any courses beyond the basics.
- In their contract that expired in August, school custodians were accountable directly to their supervisors, not to the school's principal. The contract now being negotiated may change that; if agreed to, custodians would have to sign in and out of their schools each day in the principal's office, a first.
- Renovations to Boston Latin School are expected to begin in the summer of 1988, almost five years after City Council voted to sell city garages to fund the repairs.

---

Fact Sheets done by:

CWEC

Citywide Educational Coalition  
37 Temple Place, #521  
Boston, MA 02111

(617) 542-2835

Printing by the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce